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ABSTRACT

A model of literacy instruction for limited-English-proficient (LEP) adults is described that is designed to increase effective parent involvement in children's education. Through the implementation of this model, LEP parents acquire language and parenting skills that allow them to participate more fully in their child's educational process. The model stresses the five following program components: (1) parent involvement; (2) a unique instructional process; (3) curriculum materials development; (4) teacher training; and (5) coordination with other entities. Parental involvement is achieved through recruitment procedures, site selection, and encouraging parental input on program decisions. Instruction is provided to parents in Spanish or English based on their individual needs as determined by their scores on the CTB/McGraw Hill Tests of Adult Basic Education. The curriculum materials used, videotapes and accompanying worksheets, are designed to train the parents in English and teach parenting skills, while employing familiar settings such as homes and schools to introduce information. Teachers are trained to recognize the needs and abilities of LEP adults in special workshops, and, in order to improve the delivery of services and increase project impact, the program is coordinated with other entities, such as Adult Education Cooperatives and public access TV stations. (JL) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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An Effective Model of Literacy Instruction for Limited-English Proficient Adults

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Introduction

Communicating with parents has been a difficult and often unsuccessful task for schol personnel. This task is further complicated when there is a language difference between school personnel and parents. Parents whose children are enrolled in bilingual education programs are often limited-English (LEP) or non-English proficient (NEP), and are unable to participate fully in their children's education. One strategy for responding to this concern is to increase LEP parents' English literacy skills and knowledge of the educational process.

A strategy for increasing LEP parent participation in their children's educational process was developed by the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) in the federal Department of Education in 1985. OBEMLA staff identified this strategy as the Family English Literacy Project (FELP) and funded four such projects nationwide during the first year. Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) was one of the four entities funded during that first year to develop and implement a response to the strategy. During a three-year period, IDRA developed an effective model of LEP adult literacy instruction and field tested it in urban elementary school settings. This paper will describe the critical elements of the model that facilitate LEP parents' acquisition of English language skills and knowledge of the educational system.

Review of the Literature

Many studies have been published that support the idea that parental involvement improves student achievement. Additionally, many of these studies identify specific strategies that impact student achievement and specify the benefits of parental involvement.

The benefits of parental involvement most directly impact the child. Most effective parent education programs demonstrate positive gains for the children on test performance, school behavior, and the ability to use language skills. (Becher, 1984). Barth (1979) reviewed 24 studies that focused on teacher-parent collaboration for reinforcement of children's school behavior. Regardless of the complexity of the design

of each of these programs, they all showed a positive effect on academic achievement or school performance. Epstein's (1987) study on the effects of teachers' practices of parent involvement at the John Hopkins Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools further supports the idea that parent involvement can impact student achievement. Longitudinal test data from 293 third and fifth grade students who took the California Achievement Test in the fall and spring of the 1980-81 school year were analyzed. The results showed that students whose teachers encouraged parental involvement in learning activities at home significantly increased their reading achievement.

Moreover, the parent himself benefits from his involvement with his child's schooling. The parent gains a better understanding of the school and develops more positive attitudes about school and school personnel. The increased skills gained through parent involvement help parents to become more active in the community. Most importantly, parents increase their self-confidence (Becher, 1984).

Other studies have identified specific factors that are common elements of the program designs of effective parent involvement programs. These programs are comprehensive (carefully planned and with an educational focus) and last at least a year (Gordon, 1978; Becher, 1984). Effective programs also emphasize the important role of the parent and include a structured program of training for parents and teachers (Becher, 1984; Leler, 1983).

The outcomes of these studies and similar studies, as well as IDRA's organizational experience, provided the basis for developing an effective model of literacy instruction through the Family English Literacy (FEL) strategy. Common elements of effective parent involvement programs gleaned from these studies were included in the instructional design. Parent involvement is included as an important focus of the model.

Effective Model of Literacy Instruction

This model of literacy instruction incorporates both traditional as well as non-traditional methods in the delivery of literacy services to LEP adults. Traditional methods include weekly class instruction and the use of commercially available adult

education curriculum materials. Non-traditional methods were identified to overcome obstacles to parent involvement that LEP adults face - limited participation in educational programs, low level or non literacy, lack of input, and irrelevant materials. These needs are addressed through five program components - parent involvement, a unique instructional process, curriculum materials development, teacher training and coordination.

Parent Involvement

Increased parent involvement is achieved through recruitment procedures, site selection, and input into program decisions. Each of these strategies is designed to specifically address needs of LEP adults.

Recruitment procedures are traditionally designed to reach adults who speak English and are employed. The FELP recruitment procedures are designed to address LEP adults who have not previously participated in programs of adult education. Potential participants are recruited through their children. Announcements in English and Spanish are distributed in the identified school districts to all children enrolled in local, state and federal bilingual education programs. Teachers encourage older students to read the announcements to their parents and discuss it with younger students to encourage them to tell their parents about the classes.

The majority of LEP adults are also economically disadvantaged and often transportation is an obstacle to participation. Sites for the satellite center, where classes are held, are selected in conjunction with school district personnel to ensure accessibility by the target population. Satellite centers include school buildings as well as neighborhood church facilities, public libraries or other community buildings.

Parent participation is also increased by providing a vehicle for program input by participants -- the Curriculum Evaluation Committee (CEC). The Curriculum Evaluation Committee is comprised of a parent from each school district, a school district staff member and project personnel. The purpose of the CEC is to establish a forum for project participants that allows them to provide input on curriculum materials, parent leadership topics, satellite center sites, language skills, etc. Equally important, the CEC provides input on any modifications needed to improve the model.

Student Instructional Process

Adult education programs can benefit from the research on language acquisition studies from children. Research indicates that bilingual education is a proven method for teaching English to non-English speakers. Project staff is working on a model of bilingual education for LEP adults. However, the process has been designed and includes a placement procedure and the instructional content.

All participants are pretested with the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) distributed by CTB/McGraw Hill, which yields grade level equivalents in reading, language and mathematics. Pretest results are used to identify appropriate programs of instruction, and post-test results are used to determine participants' language progress in the project. Participants are also required to complete a project profile form that includes participants formal education history in both the United States and their native country.

Following the assessment procedures, two general programs of instruction will be followed. Those participants who score below the third grade level on the TABE and who do not read and write in their native language will receive literacy instruction in Spanish and oral language development in English. Spanish literacy instruction will be discontinued once the participant can demonstrate knowledge of basic grammar concepts. Spanish literacy materials developed in Mexico will be used. Parent leadership training as well as follow-up activities for the televised lessons will also be conducted bilingually.

Those participants who score above the third grade level on the TABE and whose educational history shows completion of a least the fourth grade in their native country, will receive almost 90 percent of instruction in the development of English language skills. Spanish will be used only to clarify information and provide directions when needed. Parent leadership training as well as follow-up activities for the televised lesson will be conducted using an ESL approach.

Instruction is provided during two-hour class periods offered twice a week. Each two hour class period is designed to include language development and parent leadership training. One hour and fifteen minutes is used for language instruction, and the remaining forty-five minutes are used for parent leadership training. A method of effective teaching is used in the presentation of instruction. This method, the lesson

cycle, was developed by Madeline Hunter based on her research on mastery learning. The key steps in the lesson cycle are the following:

- anticipatory set - focusing the learner's attention on the lesson objectives;
- instructional input - presenting new information to learner by modeling, using critical attributes, demonstration, examples, etc.;
- guided practice - providing practice that is monitored by the instructor;
- independent practice - allowing learner to apply the new information without instructor guidance; and
- closure - a review of the information presented that includes learner involvement.

Curriculum Materials

A set of curriculum materials was developed by staff to provide parent leadership training to LEP parents enrolled in the Family English Literacy Project. Currently, the materials are a set of 60 videotapes with accompanying student worksheets.

Each 30-minute videotape has a dual purpose-English literacy instruction and parent leadership training. The language skills introduced in each videotape were selected from a list of minimum language skills identified for each grade level in the statewide curriculum objectives. These selected skills are representative of the four basic communication skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Parent leadership themes include issues such as testing grades, and study skills.

Through their work in using television as a successful form of communication, the staff has identified several critical elements that promote and enhance the

continued involvement of parents in improving their English language abilities and acquiring knowledge about the educational process. The critical elements that are carefully woven into the format of each program are humor, direct and indirect instruction, the use of key vocabulary in context, settings that parents can identify with, and a variety of personages to relate the theme. A four segment format is the vehicle used to incorporate these elements into a successful method for communicating with parents.

Because the main purpose of the television program is to provide instruction, information is presented both directly and indirectly, and the key vocabulary is used throughout the program. Information is provided indirectly during the first half of the program. During these segments, instruction is presented through a preview of the content; situations portrayed: problem solving, day-to-day family interactions; and a review or recap of information. "How-to" sessions, parent-child interaction techniques, and application techniques are the direct instruction techniques used in the last segments of the program. Key vocabulary for literacy development is used in every segment of the program to provide sufficient repetition for English vocabulary development. Vocabulary is introduced in the first segment and used in context by the characters portrayed throughout the remaining segments. It is used in conversations between the characters and in the directions and information the characters provide to the viewers.

The acquisition of knowledge is also facilitated by introducing information in settings that parents are able to identify with. Home, family and school settings are familiar settings that parents are comfortable with. Family living rooms, kitchens, school classroom, and school libraries provide a familiar background for parents to

acquire new knowledge about literacy and parenting in the television program.

New information is also conveyed through a variety of personages and with humor. The characters portrayed are familiar to the parents and some they are able to identify with. The characters are two parents, a newscaster and a teacher. The theme or message about school-parent relationships is emphasized by each of the characters through their role. The newscaster reviews information through humorous situations. Humor is never directed at the role of the parents. In other words, the viewer is never presented with a situation where they laugh at the parents portrayed. Parents are portrayed as individuals who are intelligent, capable and concerned about their children's education.

In their final format, this set of curriculum materials will be expanded. The materials will include a set of twenty 30-minute video tapes with student worksheets, parent-child activity sheets with structured tasks to implement at home and a teacher handbook to facilitate implementation of these materials into the classroom.

Teacher Training

Teachers attend workshops conducted by FELP staff quarterly. This training seeks to develop the teachers' repertoire of skills which facilitate working with the LEP adult student. The training addresses the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills. Training is sequential and includes follow-up in the classroom. Objectives for teachers include:

a. becoming familiar with the project requirements and processes involved in developing English language skills for LEP adults.

b. obtaining updated information about the content to be learned and taught, the sequence to follow and effective teaching practices for developing skills.

c. recognizing the need to modify instruction to meet the needs of Hispanic LEP adults through the use of ESL techniques, native language and culturally appropriate materials.

d. planning for classroom implementation to ensure integration of these new teaching skills.

This training targets both theory and practice. Staff assists teachers in bridging the gap between theory and practice. This is accomplished by providing in-classroom assistance and follow-up, and by incorporating learning materials from the IDRA Family English Literacy resource collection into their classroom.

Coordination

Coordination with other entities improves the delivery of services and increases project impact. The IDRA Family English Literacy Project has identified entities in the community to provide in-kind services to benefit program participants. These in-kind services include classroom instructors, student materials and television production assistance.

The Region XX Adult Education Cooperative assists by providing classroom instructors and basic student materials for English language skills development. Student materials for Spanish literacy development will be provided by the Instituto Cultural Mexicano. Paragon Cable TV provides assistance through their public access program. Their assistance includes use of their studio, and the professional and

technical staff to produce the videotapes.

Each of the project components is integrated into one service delivery model to provide LEP adults in the San Antonio area with an opportunity to improve their English language skills and their knowledge of the education process. Ultimately these skills will allow parents to participate more fully in their children's educational attainment.

Summary

The Family English Literacy Project under the direction of IDRA is implementing an effective model of literacy instruction based on the principles of effective parent involvement and bilingual education. Through the implementation of this model, LEP parents acquire language and parenting skills that will allow them to participate more fully in the educational process. The model's success can be measured by increased enrollment figures in project classes, increased parent participation in providing input to project activities, project participants' increased English language skills, and project participants' increased knowledge of how schools operate and the parent's role in their children's education. At the end of the grant period, quantitative data will be available on the impact of the model, as well as a refined set of curriculum materials to facilitate literacy and parenting instruction for LEP adults.

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